



**Stakeholder Group on Ageing - Africa**  
**6<sup>th</sup> Africa Regional Forum for Sustainable Development, 2020**  
**Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe**  
**Key Messages**

**Preamble**

As Africa ages with its numbers of those over 60 projected to grow from current 69 million to 226 million in 2050, transformative solutions must include and celebrate older women and men across the continent. The transformative actions must take consideration of the increased longevity, capacity and the unattended risks associated with age discrimination and ageism that have left the majority of older persons living in abject poverty and subjected to neglect, abuse and violence.

The global and continental sustainable development frameworks, Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 respectively commit to ending poverty, reduce inequalities and tackle climate change. Both frameworks commit to ensuring people centered and human rights approaches to ensure inequality is eradicated. Specifically, Agenda 2030 commits to leave no one behind by reaching first, the farthest left behind. These commitments have a great potential for countries to turn around the neglected state of older persons in the continent through efforts towards making the data management systems, laws, policies, practices and services fit for contributions and services to older persons.

Minimal evidence of efforts that bring dignity and prosperity among older persons have been reported. However, the progress of development and adoption of legal, policy and infrastructural frameworks for older persons and their mainstreaming at national, sub-regional and continental levels remains slow. For instance, the AU Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa adopted in 2016 by Head of States is yet to come in force. Only two countries have ratified out of the 15 ratifications needed. Older persons rights remain invisible in Africa human rights mechanism, parliamentary systems and accountability institutions.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Africa Regional Forum for Sustainable Development theme "2020-2030: A Decade to deliver a transformed and prosperous Africa through the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063", is a great moment to build consensus on an accelerated commitment needed for the decade of action on age inclusive SDGs and Agenda 2063. This will ensure a prosperous continent where peoples of all ages attain their wellbeing, dignity and quality of life as they contribute their talents and potential to advance the continent.

Priorities for older women and men across Africa are the following:

- **Greater efforts to realize the universal right to the social protection floor:** Social security is a right set out in Articles 22 and 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The right includes income security in old age. The social protection floor, recognized as essential to achieving the SDG poverty goal in target 1.3, is the agreed standard to deliver these rights as guarantees. As well as access to essential health care,

including maternity care, enabling children to enjoy basic income security and access to nutrition, education, care, and any other necessary goods and services; enabling persons in active age to enjoy basic income security, particularly in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity, disability, the standard is that all older persons should enjoy basic income security. Globally the absence of social protection currently affects about 55% of the world's population. According to the ILO 2019 report on social protection 70% of older people in Africa have yet to enjoy this right, and there is both low coverage and only a handful of countries delivering regular income in old age through a social pension.

The transformative impact of income in old age for recipients and their families and communities is widely recognized and embedded in a number of declarations, including the 2006 Livingstone Call for Social Protection, 2016 Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons, and the 2020 Protocol for the rights of citizens of Africa to the right for social protection and social security. ILO amongst others estimate costs for progressive implementation of this right will be between 2-4% of GDP. Action is needed now.

- **Health:** Good health is a fundamental right across the life course. It is highly prized by older persons who do not want to impose on families for support for medicines and health services. Out of pocket health expenses in old age impoverish generations. The right to health services are contained in SDG3, Target 3.8 on universal health coverage and is the right of all older Africans. In 2020 we call on African member states to ensure the commitment to leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind (first) in access to universal health coverage, through guaranteeing free and affordable health care services/health insurance to all older persons. Establishing and strengthening comprehensive and integrated family and community level care and support with accessible and affordable primary care systems for geriatric care services to prolong the healthy life of older persons' helping them remain productive, independent and autonomous is urgently needed.

The right to health for older persons must be included in national laws, with ageing and older people's health and care needs explicitly included in national health policies, supported by health workforces that have the skills and commitment to respond to the needs of ageing populations and health information systems that are inclusive of all ages and are not age-capped. Member States need to invest in age-inclusive universal health coverage (UHC), long-term care and support.

- **Gender equality must include attention to older women and men:** Efforts to promote gender equity across the life course need to be enhanced. A major barrier is invisibility of older women in gender equality due to exclusion from services because of the intersect of gender, age and disability, and lack of visibility in statistics which is not routinely collected and disaggregated by age, gender and disability in 5 year cohorts from the cradle to the grave. Older women call for the recognition of their informal and unpaid labour, the caregiving for young and old relatives and the urgent need they have to secure land and inheritance rights. In 2016 in Tanzania, the Legal and Human Rights Centre reported 394 cases of killings of older persons due to witchcraft allegations, of whom 70% were older women.<sup>1</sup> Other structural barriers affecting older women especially in contexts of protracted crises are malnutrition and food insecurity.

SDG 5 in reinforcing the important language on 'girls and women of all ages' of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, recognising the need for gender equality

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<sup>1</sup> TGNP Gender Analysis report 2015

across the life course. SDGs 5 also recognises intersecting discrimination (when different forms of discrimination overlap) and cumulative discrimination (when the impact of discrimination builds up over a lifetime). Across the world, including in Africa older women call for a presence and voice in all planning and decision-making processes. Further, there is need to recognise the need to analyse and address the multiple forms of discrimination that many girls and women are subjected to. They ask for information on their rights and entitlements, access to specific financial and other resources to facilitate their contributions and that of their organisations and for national legislation and policies to be adopted in line with international and regional human rights standards including the AU Protocol on the rights of older persons.

- **End Age-discrimination, Combat AGEISM:** Age discrimination and ageism continue unabated in families, community and society. Older women and men lose their livelihoods due to their lower social status, lack of knowledge of their rights, and the lack of laws and policies to promote and protect them. The current high poverty levels in the society, tension between traditional and new family structures, urbanization and restructuring of the basis of support networks for older people among others create a conducive environment for an increased risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation of older people especially older women. Visibility of neglect, abuse and violence among older people remains low as the majority of the abuses are not reported. Elder abuse remains the least investigated type of violence in national surveys, and one of the least addressed in national action plans. Further, data on abuse and violence focus on population groups below 49 years.

Discrimination in old age needs to be better understood, clearly recognised and universally prohibited. African Member States must acknowledge and confront ageism and the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Further, African Member States need to accelerate the ratification and implementation of the AU Protocol for the Rights of Older Persons that is well resourced and supported by a mult-sectorial and multi-stakeholder coordination and reporting mechanism. African member states should join the global discussions to put a binding international legal instrument to protect the rights of older persons.

- **Urban development:** The demographic transition in Africa is happening alongside rapid urbanization and while the majority of older people are currently living in rural areas, an increasing number are living in cities and face significant challenges. They face physical, social and economic barriers that prevent them realizing their rights including their rights to health, participation, social inclusion and income security. Older persons in cities experience barriers to accessing employment, housing, transport and health care services. Older people are disproportionately affected by exposure to air pollution and noncommunicable diseases which are exacerbated by unhealthy urban lifestyle. Increasing level of crime and violence in cities is a major concern for older people.

For the cities to be inclusive for all and to achieve the pledge to leave no one behind, require us to ensure that cities are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable for all people as they age. Practical implementation of SDG 11 has been partly addressed by the new urban agenda which strongly argues for the inclusion of older people in all stages in planning and decision making and demands age and gender responsive actions. Older people have a say and must participate and be consulted in urban planning initiatives to ensure the urban planning supports the creation of spaces and communities that are

welcoming, walkable and mixed use, well maintained and designed, feeling safe and secure at all times. Safe, affordable and accessible public transport and non-motorised forms of travel; increasing livelihood opportunities for older persons and inclusion in city level disaster resilience, response planning and support to older displaced people are essential.

- **Older persons, humanitarian crisis and climate change:** Increase of population ageing is happening in a continent experiencing the largest humanitarian crisis due to conflicts and natural disasters with climate change and land issues further deteriorating the situation. According to [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre](#) (2017), at least 15,000 *people are displaced every day inside African countries*. Older people make up at least 10-30% of displaced people across different contexts in the region, with the majority of those displaced being older women (ODI, HelpAge et al, 2018)<sup>2</sup>. In many cases, victims of humanitarian crisis and/or from adverse impacts of climate change are considered as a homogenous, undifferentiated mass. The humanitarian responders often fail to recognize the vulnerabilities, needs and capacities of older people, who often also experience social and economic marginalization and discrimination from their communities and sometimes from their own families before a crisis.

There is urgent need for the domestication and implementation of national, regional and international humanitarian and climate change frameworks to accommodate the significant administrative unique roles and issues in their implementation to ensure fulfilment of refugees, returnees and displaced older persons while considering the role and expertise in conflict resolution and mitigating climate change. The Global Compact on Refugees offers an opportunity to support Member States and stakeholders to protect, assist and empower older people while pulling momentum to ensure older people in emergency situation contribute in delivering the SDGs core pledge that no one will be left behind and endeavour to reach the most disadvantaged, those furthest behind first.

- **Data disaggregation by Age and other dimensions:** The current data systems are not fit for purpose and are inadequate for understanding the situation of older people and monitoring the impact SDG implementation is having in their lives. Concerted action is needed at all levels of the data system from collection to utilization, and from all stakeholders, to improve the quality and range of data. The scale of the challenge of better data on ageing and older people is immense.

The Titchfield Group on Ageing-related Statistics and Age-Disaggregated Data was established at the 49th session of the UN Statistical Commission, after receiving support from the Africa Group which represents all African statistical offices. The Titchfield Group is responsible for developing standardized tools and methods for producing both data disaggregated by age and ageing-related data. African National Statistical Offices are encouraged to actively participate in the work of the Titchfield Group and to support governments to improve data management systems particularly those related to regular and administrative surveys as well as undertake national wider situational analysis of older persons. This will help government understand the progress they are making on older persons but also have data and evidence to inform law and policy reforms.

- **Intergenerational solidarity and demographic dividend (DD).** Generations working together have the potential to create peace and harmony a space that creates potential

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<sup>2</sup> Humanitarian Policy Group, HelpAge International and ODI, July 2018; Older people in Displacement Falling through the Cracks of Emergency Responses.

to harness talents and transfer skills across groups. This enhances empowerment of individuals but also development of families, communities and society. The assumption that older persons are non-productive and not contributing to society translates into their virtual omission in African DD agendas. Yet the intergenerational transmission of poverty or benefits determine the wellbeing of each generation. With increased education level, improved health and longevity means that older persons would contribute more to their families and society hence contribute to demographic dividend– hence the economic and strategic relevance of older cohorts. Further, if the ageing sector is well organised, it has the ability to create new markets and new job opportunities in various sectors (e.g. care sector, geriatrician etc).

There is urgency for Africa to promote intergenerational solidarity and community-based approaches to help in challenging the prevailing narrative that older people are a burden with little to contribute to their families and communities. The continent needs to challenge and prevent negative social attitudes (ageism) and age discriminatory laws and policies [employment age cut, barrier to access to loan or/and approaches that do not promote intergenerational co-existence or work environment, and/or opportunities for lifelong learning] that denies the continent opportunity to maximise on the talents and potential of each generation. The intergenerational approach allows generations exchange capacities to advance the development of the continent.

- **Intersectionality of ageing and disability:** Ageing is characterized by an increased risk of disability especially due to increased level of falls and increased cases of non-communicable diseases that are major causes of impairments that results to disability. Disability prevalence increases with age (with no significance between men and women) with at least 46% with a moderate or severe disability compared of people aged over 60 to 15% of those aged between 15 and 59%.

There is need for governments and stakeholders to ensure the NCD health strategies are inclusive and appropriate by embedding the understanding of the specific and often complex and multiple health issues faced by people throughout their lives particularly the unique forms of marginalization caused by intersection of old age, gender and disability. This can prevent or delay disability and improve quality of life and reduce cost of health and care system. Further, there is need for social sector laws, policies and practices, recognition of intersectionality between age and disability and rehabilitation strategies available to support older persons who acquire disability and also for the increasing disability as people with disability age. All stakeholders need to promote disaggregation of data by sex, age (in five-year cohorts), disability and other aspects to be able to have sensitive laws, policies and practices that consider intersectionality of age and disability.

- **Partnerships and collaboration:** African stakeholder including member states, UN Agencies, Africa Union and civil society are encouraged to form strong partnerships and collaboration, address deficits related to data, resources (technical and human resources), laws, policies and programmes that help countries to adequately prepare for the increasing number of older persons to ensure older persons enjoy their rights as they contribute to the advancement of society. The continent is encouraged to foster peer to peer learning among the African countries and across the globe to help Africa increase its efforts towards addressing issues and rights of older persons as committed in national, regional and international frameworks.

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### **About Stakeholder Group on Ageing – Africa**

During the 2018 Africa Forum for Sustainable Development – Major Groups and Other Stakeholders Coordination Mechanism, older people’s issues were recognised as one of the Major Groups and Other Stakeholder. The coalition is under the co-chair leadership of HelpAge International and Dave Omokaro Foundation, Stakeholder Group on Ageing (SGA) – Africa. SGA-Africa is a coalition of organizations that brings together civil societies, professional bodies, private sector, human rights institutions, academia, individuals, older persons and organizations representing older persons. The coalition aims at coordinating the older people constituency groups in Africa region to constructively engage and promote understanding and inclusion of older people in SDGs and Agenda 2063 domestication, implementation, monitoring and reporting. The SGA-Africa has attracted more than 100 organizations and offers an enabling environment to promote understanding and inclusion of older people in social, economic, cultural and political sphere in the region.

\*The document was drafted by Susan Somers and Roseline Kihumba with input and review from SGA members.